

Medicaid Providers Invited to Participate in Program to Increase Access to Medications to Treat Opioid Use Disorder

NEW CASTLE (Feb. 23, 2021) – The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services invites medical providers and practice managers in primary care, women's health, infectious disease and psychiatry to participate in a program that will train providers to treat opioid use disorder (OUD) among Medicaid recipients. Office-Based Opioid Treatment (OBOT) involves prescribing safe, effective, Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved medications, especially buprenorphine, to treat OUD in primary care and other outpatient settings.

The Office-Based Opioid Treatment (OBOT) Fellowship Program helps practices design and implement clinical and operational workflows to use medications to treat OUD. The fellowship runs from March 23 through Sept. 23 via webinars and discussion groups. It will enable participating prescribers and clinic practice managers to:

- Learn from addiction medicine experts
- Exchange ideas through a peer network
- Receive technical assistance to offer Office-Based Opioid Treatment (OBOT)
- Learn about the available Medicaid financing mechanisms for OBOT
- Gain access to a curated online library of tools and evidence-based practices

The program – supported by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services through a \$3.58 million grant awarded to the state – provides \$3,000 for clinical providers and \$2,000 for practice managers in primary care, women's health, infectious disease and psychiatric outpatient settings.

Delaware's Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health will also offer up to \$49,000 for practices represented in the OBOT Fellowship Program that agree to implement office-based opioid treatment and meet performance metrics.

"Opioid addiction is an ongoing and often deadly presence for many Delawareans and their families, and we need every tool at our disposal to help them confront it," said Gov. John Carney. "Equipping our medical providers to manage the treatment of these patients is an important part of this effort."

Designed to accommodate participants' schedules, the training will be given in two phases. Phase 1, lasting four weeks, features self-paced modules and weekly discussion groups. Phase 2 runs from late April to late September and consists of biweekly interactive webinars.

"This training will help clinicians and practice managers provide 'whole person' care for people with opioid use disorder," said DHSS Secretary Molly Magarik. "This should lead to greater access to treatment and better physical health outcomes for these patients."

Outpatient providers, including primary care doctors, develop relationships with patients and communities that position them to bring opioid use disorder treatment to many people who need it, said Dr. Elizabeth Brown, Chief Medical Officer for the state's Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance. "However," she added, "most health care providers didn't receive adequate training in school to feel comfortable providing medications for OUD. This fellowship opportunity is a way to get providers up to speed on the latest treatment approaches and give them tools to feel confident in providing

“OUD treatment in their offices. We have medications that are safe and effective at treating OUD, and we want to maximize the number of providers who can use them.”

More information, including how to register, is available at the Division of Medicaid & Medical Assistance website or by contacting SupportAct@delaware.gov or 304-663-1171.

As of 2019, Delaware had the second-highest rate of drug overdose deaths in the country, with 48 deaths per 100,000 people, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There were 431 overdose deaths in the state that year, according to the Delaware Drug Overdose Fatality Review Commission’s 2020 Annual Report. That was up from 400 in 2018. As of mid-February, there were 47 suspected overdose deaths in Delaware so far this year.

If you or a loved one is struggling with substance use disorder, please call DHSS’ Delaware Hope Line to be connected to trained crisis professionals who can discuss treatment options at 1-833-9-HOPEDE (1-833-946-7333). Individuals and families also can visit DHSS’ website, www.HelpIsHereDE.com, to find addiction treatment and recovery services in Delaware or nearby states.

The Office-Based Opioid Treatment (OBOT) Fellowship Program is the state’s latest effort to tackle the opioid addiction crisis in Delaware. In late December, the Department of Health and Social Services announced that revenue from a new opioid impact fee created by the Delaware General Assembly in 2019 will be used to prevent overdose deaths and provide new services to those seeking treatment for their substance use disorder.

The department announced plans to spend the first \$700,000 that had been raised by the fee as of the third quarter of 2020, as required by Senate Bill 34. Those funds will be used to bolster Delaware’s supply of naloxone, a medication that

can reverse an opioid overdose; support the expansion of Bridge Clinic services in all three counties; and provide grants to people in treatment or recovery for such needs as transportation, housing, or education.